

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 099 715

CG 009 275

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TITLE An Investigation of Self-Concept Differences and the Use of Group Counseling with Incarcerated and Nonincarcerated Juvenile Delinquents.
PUB DATE Feb 73
NOTE 11p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Personnel and Guidance Association (San Diego, California, February 1973)
EDRS PRICE MF-\$0.75 HC-\$1.50 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS Adolescents; *Counseling Effectiveness; *Delinquency; Delinquent Rehabilitation; *Group Counseling; Institutionalized (Persons); *Rehabilitation Counseling; *Self Concept; Speeches
IDENTIFIERS Tennessee Self Concept Scale

ABSTRACT

This paper presents a study whose purpose was to help determine whether group counseling is one effective means of helping juvenile offenders help themselves. It also compared the significance of the self-concept in incarcerated and nonincarcerated juvenile delinquents. Two experimental groups received eight weeks of group counseling once a week for three hours, and were compared to two control groups on a pre-posttest of the Tennessee Self Concept Scale (TSCS). An analysis of the effects of group counseling indicated that none of the self-concept variables significantly distinguished the counseled groups. However, the following trends were noted: (1) the experimental group had 71 percent of the most positive self-concept changes; (2) there were no differences between the nonincarcerated experimental and control group as to the amount of most positive self-concept changes; and (3) the incarcerated experimental group had slightly more positive self-concept changes than did the nonincarcerated experimental group. The author offers several points to be considered when using group counseling with juvenile delinquents. (Author/PC)

ED 099715

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AN INVESTIGATION OF SELF-CONCEPT DIFFERENCES AND
THE USE OF GROUP COUNSELING WITH INCARCERATED
AND NONINCARCERATED JUVENILE DELINQUENTS

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As presented at the 1973 American Personnel
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(February 12, 1973)

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INTRODUCTION

In New York, a sixteen-year-old male teenager steals a car, speeding recklessly around town, smashing headlong into a bridge. In Atlanta, several teenagers batter a store window, taking \$500 worth of merchandise. In Los Angeles a gang of boys spend each day breaking and entering into unattended homes.

These are but a few of the ever increasing incidents that illustrate the alarming rise in crime by the juvenile population. In desperation, the public has often demanded that the offenders be locked up to save society from their actions. And so, many teenagers, who all too often have been reared in adverse conditions, are taken from their homes and placed in an institutional confinement.

But rather than merely removing such individuals from society, rehabilitation or change is theoretically the institutions' responsibilities. However, the distressing fact is that most juvenile institutions have failed to make any significant life, goal, or value changes in the majority of the teenagers in their charge.

In an attempt to explain why the present system has failed, Milton G. Rector (1970), director of the National Council on Crime and Delinquency, notes the following:

1. Over half of the youngsters in juvenile training schools have never been tried on probation.
2. In many states, correctional authorities administratively transfer to state prisons youngsters who are committed to juvenile institutions by juvenile or family court without protection of due process.
3. Eighty cents of every correctional dollar--a sum exceeding \$8000,000,000 each year--is spent on institutional services.
4. Eighty-seven percent of correctional manpower is employed in institutions.

5. Less than five percent of the personnel in correctional institutions are assigned to treatment or rehabilitation work.
6. Half of the juvenile detention homes which do exist offer no diagnostic services or studies for detained children.

Consequently, the trend in rehabilitating juvenile delinquents seems to be toward non-incarceration. This approach is based upon the premise that returning the individual to his social environment and providing him with professional guidance is more beneficial than placing him in an institution where his delinquent attitudes are reinforced and new anti-social attitudes may be acquired. By returning him to his social environment, such an individual maintains a higher level of "free will" and professional help is more easily given and received than in an institutional setting.

The purpose of this study is to help determine whether group counseling is one effective means of helping juvenile offenders help themselves. It also investigates the significance of the self-concept in the comparison of incarcerated and non-incarcerated juvenile delinquents.

PREVIOUS RESEARCH

Little research which relates directly to the problem is available in the literature. Ruch (1963) notes that in addition to impulsiveness and inability to interpret and evaluate self and others correctly, a third personality trait which research indicates is characteristic of delinquent youngsters is a negative self-concept. Other research by Gluck and Gluck (1950), McCann (1956), and Travett (1965) relate some differences between delinquents and nondelinquents. Few studies have been reported concerning differences between incarcerated and nonincarcerated populations.

Noted Adlerian psychologist Rudolf Dreikurs (1967) stresses the need for group counseling with juvenile delinquents, saying it seems to be the only type of treatment which is helpful. For a complete description of the advantages and disadvantages of group counseling, the reader is directed to Gazda's (1968) Basic Approaches to Group Psychotherapy and Group Counseling. An excellent example of the use of the Tennessee Self Concept Scale with delinquent individuals is provided by Fitts and Hamner (1969).

METHOD

Sixteen boys incarcerated at the John G. Richards School for Boys, Department of Youth Services, and fourteen males on probation at the Richland County Family Court, both in Columbia, South Carolina, were administered the Tennessee Self Concept Scale (TSCS). The two populations were then randomly placed into an experimental or control group. The experimental group received eight weeks of group counseling once a week for three hours, while the control group received no such group counseling. All sixteen incarcerated teenagers were then post tested on the TSCS. Ten of the incarcerated population were similarly post tested (two boys ran away from home, while two more enrolled in a trade school). The statistical procedure used in the analysis of results included a parametric T-test on the combined incarcerated and non-incarcerated populations. An Analysis of Variance between pre and post test scores of all groups was similarly conducted.

RESULTS

The results indicated that significant self-concept differences on the TSCS occurred between the combined incarcerated and nonincarcerated populations. Table 1 compares both mean pre-test results as well as an analysis of variance of the pre- and post-test scores on the TSCS counseling form.

TABLE 1
THE ARITHMETICAL MEAN SCORES OF INCARCERATED AND NON-
INCARCERATED JUVENILE DELINQUENTS ON TSCS COUNSELING FORM

Variable	Incarcerated Mean Scores	Standard Deviation	Nonincarcerated Mean Scores	Standard Deviation	Level of Significance (T-Test)	Level of Significance ANOVA Pre-Post
Self Criticism	54.63	8.4	49.86	14.2		
Total Score	35.88	4.8	40.64	9.1		.01
Row 1: Basic Identity	38.00	9.7	37.93	10.6		
Row 2: Self Satisfaction	40.25	7.8	47.57	8.9	.05	.01
Row 3: Behavior	33.13	7.0	38.00	8.4		.01
Column A Physical Self	43.25	6.5	47.93	9.4		.05
Column B Moral Ethical Self	29.81	5.6	34.07	10.6		.03
Column C Personal	40.44	3.9	46.21	7.1	.05	.03
Column D Family Self	38.13	10.7	33.71	8.5		
Column E Social Self	38.94	5.8	44.93	9.1	.05	.01

TABLE 1

(Continued)

Variable	Incarcerated Mean Scores	Standard Deviation	Nonincarcerated Mean Scores	Standard Deviation	Level of Significance (T-Test)	Level of Significance ANOVA Pre-Post
Variability	56.81	11.3	51.57	10.4		
Column Variability	56.38	12.4	48.00	11.2	.05	
Row Variability Total	54.25	10.7	55.36	8.4		
Distribution Score	50.75	14.7	56.43	20.8		

Table 2 compares similar scores on the TSCS clinical form.

When comparing the effects on group counseling, an analysis of variance indicated that none of the self-concept variables significantly distinguished the counseled groups. However, the following trends were obtained on the TSCS between the experimental and control incarcerated groups: (a) the experimental group had 71% of the most positive self-concept changes; (b) there were no differences between the nonincarcerated experimental and control group as to the amount of most positive self-concept changes; (c) the incarcerated experimental group had slightly more positive self-concept changes than did the nonincarcerated experimental group; (d) there were no differences in the number of positive self-concept changes in either control group; and (e) the combined experimental groups had slightly more positive changes than did the combined control groups.

DISCUSSION

In the present study, group counseling showed only moderate effects in helping facilitate self-concept changes in both incarcerated and nonincarcerated juvenile delinquents. When considering the use of group counseling in such a situation the following points should be considered.

1. In the nonincarcerated population, the weekly counseling sessions were optional for the participants, and despite letters and telephone calls, attendance was poor. Thus, of a maximum possibility of 56 boys in attendance over the eight week period, only 55 per cent of that number were present. This compares with a 92 per cent attendance in the incarcerated population, the only absences resulting from four boys being paroled before the final group meeting.
2. In the incarcerated population, the boys in counseling were called individually from the total juvenile population during the evening headcount, resulting in their being labeled as "sick, crazy, etc."

TABLE 2

THE ARITHMETICAL MEAN SCORES OF INCARCERATED AND NONINCARCERATED
JUVENILE DELINQUENTS ON THE TSCS CLINICAL FORM

Variable	Incarcerated Mean Scores	Standard Deviation	Nonincarcerated Mean Scores	Standard Deviation	Level of Significance (T-Test)	Level of Significance ANOVA Frc-Post
True-False Ratio	76.38	14.6	56.00	14.0	.01	.03
Net Conflict	71.06	16.1	55.21	12.7	.01	.05
Total Conflict	72.56	14.5	63.14	14.4	.05	.03
Defensive Positive Score	49.75	8.5	52.14	12.5		
General Maladjustment	64.75	7.5	62.29	5.3		
Psychotic Score	63.63	10.0	57.57	6.0	.01	.05
Personality Disorder Score	70.94	4.2	63.79	8.4	.01	.001
Neurotic Score	58.56	5.6	55.79	10.6		
Personality Integration Score	35.56	8.5	37.36	11.5		
Number of Deviant Signs	78.38	11.7	69.36	10.5	.01	

3. Paper and pencil tests relying on the subjects' honesty may also be of questionable reliability in these populations.
4. The possible positive effects of only three hours weekly group counseling could well have been nullified by negative living conditions in the institutional setting.
5. Eight weeks of group counseling may be too brief a period to effect long term self-concept changes.
6. Group counseling may have been a benefit in areas not reflected in the TSCE (i.e., fewer "delinquent" acts).

The major finding of this study would appear to be the significant self-concept differences between the combined incarcerated and nonincarcerated populations. The items which most significantly distinguished the two populations were the total score, self-satisfaction, behavior, personal self, social self, a true-false ratio indicating a response set or response bias, and a personality disorder score.

Additional studies are needed to determine whether institutionalization may result in a lower self-concept or whether a low-self concept is a factor associated with an individual's deviant behavior, resulting in eventual incarceration. However the present study would appear to indicate that as a group incarcerated males have a lower self-esteem or feelings of self worth than do nonincarcerated male juvenile delinquents.

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